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Cassia

Edith M. Thomas

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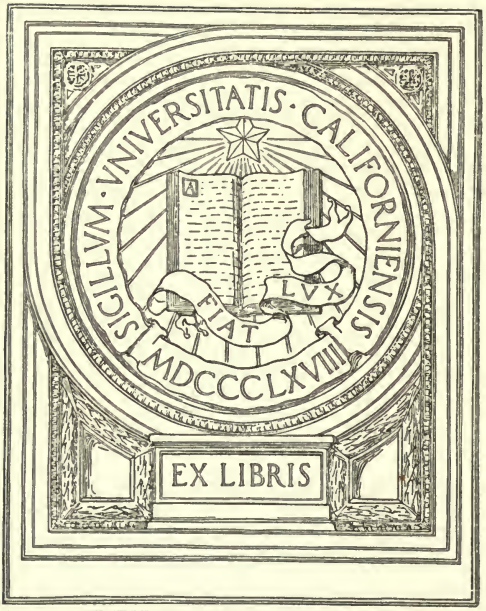
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CASSIA

And Other Verse

By

EDITH M. THOMAS

Author of "The Dancers and other Legends and Lyrics" etc

BOSTON: RICHARD G. BADGER
The Gorham Press
1905

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MAIN

AD MUNDUM

Into a world of loveliness,
Into a world of wonder sent
(Which one by loving shall possess),
No loveless moment have I spent:
If Life but failed when Love went by,
Then never, never should I die!

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CASSIA

(From Zola's " Rome ")

There were, in meadows of the Trebizond
  (So runs the fable), certain treacherous flowers
Whose honey, like a fell magician's wand,
  Bore spells to steal away the sentient powers
Of him who tasted in some moment fond;
  And henceforth knew he never lucid hours:
Such poison fragile flower-cups might distill,
And bees might gather of their errant will.

Oh, wherefore should the venomed sweetness tole,
  While nectarous Summer's harmless stores are spurned!
Oh, wherefore should the wavering, bee-like soul
  On Fate's light breath descend, where, undiscerned,
Its dearest bane shall smile away control!
  Nor, till the wasting flesh shall lie inurned,
Shall soar again the spirit's wingèd fire,
Freed from the desolation of desire!

But I delay. Too long reprieve I crave.
  Then, let me summon forth all hardihood
For these dark annals of the Tiber wave. . . .
  The palace of the Boccaneras stood
Where almost might the auburn current lave
  Its walls, but that, in tender dreamy mood,
Between the ripple and the frowning stone
A little garden did with grace atone.

Therein — what matters it what flowers did blow,
  And spake a dual tongue to those might read,
In shy perfume, or dyes that frankly glow,
  Of love naïve, or veilèd hearts that bleed?

Some orange trees there were, a careless row;
A leaning olive here, and lest, indeed,
Should Love and Life forget their chiefest dread,
A cypress threw the Shadow of the Dead.

Close by, among some laurels, one might hear
A slender stream descend, yet scarce might see.
Its crystal laughters parted lips austere,
And mocked its stony-browed Melpomene.
Its every drop might well have been a tear,
Yet from those lips it fell in truant glee,
To play at Lethe in a pagan tomb,
Carved with relief of Iphianassa's doom.

Ay, but to turn the whetted azure blade
That thirsted to be slaked in crimson life,
A goddess bent, a staying hand was laid,
And a white hart appeased the cruel knife.
So fared it not with our Italian maid,
Whose lines were cast amid the lurid strife
Of crown and mitre, in the Cæsars' home,
Called once, and ever called, Imperial Rome!

The palace of the Boccaneras stood,
A builded theft of marbles reft away
From storied walls that cover many a rood,
That, desolated though they be, yet sway
Our spirits with a sense of plenitude
Of power, of majesty, beyond decay.
That theft, in part, was Colossean stone
Had heard the early Christian's parting groan.

Marble the door-case, now of ivory stain;
Stout ribs of curving iron the windows wore;
And here, enniched, in robe of satin grain,
The Virgin downward smiled for evermore;
And there, a shield, above the grated pane,
The emblem of the the Boccaneras bore:

Beneath a fiery dragon, wingèd-paced,
Was *bocca nera, alma rossa,* traced.

And half the legend well I know was true
Of her, sole daughter of that ancient race.
Red fountain-fires supplied the life that flew
Along the veins and lit the ardent face.
So will ye think when, sometime, ye shall view
Her portrait, touched with never-aging grace,
'Mong others of the eld, grown dim and chill;
A rosy spirit breathes about it still.

There dwelt she with a father she revered,
And with the memory of a mother gone
Too soon, who in Madonna dreams appeared, —
In those young dreams that, smiling, fade at dawn.
A brother, too, was hers, beloved, yet feared;
For zeal fanatic held his heart in pawn,
And poison, from the antique pride distilled,
Reined in his youth, and kindly impulse chilled.

Her eighteenth year sweet Cassia had not passed
When her impassioned soul was led along,
First, under gossamer gyves of fancy cast,
That soon transmuted were to fetters strong;
And whom she loved the first, she loved the last.
Though shadowed by some far ancestral wrong
Wrought by her own, or by her lover's, line
Their hearts agreed, Forgiveness is divine.

Their hearts agreed, their lips thereto set seal;
But Fate far kindlier by them had dealt
Just here to part the twain. No such appeal.
For Flavio, of the Corradini, dwelt
This side the Tiber; and small boats can steal
Their way at eve and in the shadow melt,

That friendly trees extend far down their banks,
While Love, plying a muffled oar, gives thanks.

Moreover, down a terrace garden-stair,
  Amid the selfsame shadows, one may glide
With such wise stealth that none shall be aware.
  The very flowers, that something might have sighed,
To secrecy did their young mistress swear.
  And now, upon the sleepy Tiber tide,
They drift along, they two alone, alone,
As in a little planet of their own.

Soon were they passing where the Tiber curled
  Round Ponte Rotto's shattered piers that seem
A giant wreck, thither by flood-tide hurled,
  Or cliffy temple builded in mid-stream.
So, past the ruins of a bygone world,
  Dream-like they glide, lost in a tender dream.
I think of them as of the singing wren,
That haunts those roofless halls of vanished men.

Yet, oft enough the sigh went with the kiss,
  And oft enough, with tightening hands, they owned
That, ere their time, for paradise like this,
  Both man and maiden had with life atoned.
"Ay, *both!*" cried Cassia, "never shall one miss
  The other, or by other here be moaned!"
She spake of those who, in the older day,
Could not have loved so much, yet showed the way.

Dear women had there been, of her own name,
  Who had the copy fair to her revealed:
Was there not Sigismonda, who became
  A page to her own knight, and last, his shield
From Paynim arrows tipped with venomous flame?

Costanza, too, that seeds of death concealed
Within a smiling wine, and drank thereof,
And won to drink, the slayer of her love!

Then, in fond rivalry, would Flavio tell
Of certain of his house in days agone,
Who had for love done martyrly and well;
He read, at random, from the rubric drawn:
"To ransom her he loved, did Guido sell
His freedom, nor for ten years saw the dawn;
And Hugo, likewise, with wild beasts had fought."
"Our loves," she said, "may set all these at naught.

"And afterwards, the saints will let us meet
Where we have naught to dread, in yon dear star."
To which would Flavio answer: "But, my sweet,
Safe places on the good earth surely are;
My cousin is the master of a fleet,
He comes next month, and Ostia is not far.
Some evening like to this, down stream we slip,
And in the harbor find Eugenio's ship.

"Thy vesper star — we'll find it, far awest,
When, some near morrow day, a favoring wind
Shall drive us fleeting o'er the billowy crest.
Why else did our great Genoese seek the Ind
But to spy out for us a secret nest?
There will we live; nor shall our hairs be thinned,
Nor eyes meet eyes less bright, if, in good sooth,
A certain knight hath found the Fount of Youth!"

So built Love's brave artificer, nor knew
If more in earnest or in jest he were.
Meanwhile, the mirage of their future grew
Less shadow, and a hope began to stir
In both their hearts to bid sour Fate adieu!
But one chief fear to Cassia would recur:

" My brother's glance of late is passing keen —
It must be Ercole hath something seen! "

Too true her fears; for even while she spake,
And while the little boat to moorage slid,
Were eyes that watched, most cruelly awake;
Some keen malignity her Eden hid;
She felt it as the bird feels, 'mid the brake,
The coilèd terror! Now, her footsteps thrid
The garden mazes; now, an instant, stay,
Caught in some vine that trails across the way.

Grim dreams are hers, if dreams at all she hath;
And with the morn a letter comes with speed,
Its seal the dragon darting fiery scath:
" Sweet sister mine, I pray you, take good heed:
A passion-vine was fallen on the path
Last night; thy garden has of pruning need;
And if thy maiden strength too tender be,
Doubt not, the task shall be performed for thee."

Few words there were beside, but pregnant those:
" Perchance, a poniard might of use be found.
Meanwhile, our Roman nights breed many foes
To health — the river air is most unsound.
Thy brother would not see the morning rose
To fail thy cheek. To guard thee is he bound;
And thereunto is sworn by such dread names,
His soul, if deedless, earns the torment flames."

How, spite of all espial, passed the word
Had, for a moment, made her own heart quail —
That Flavio's presence deadly risk incurred?
A scarf thrown idly o'er the loggia's rail,
Or, like the thoughtless lyric of a bird,
Some snatch of careless song, conveyed the tale.
Else, old Adela to her foster-child
Brought counsel long experience had compiled.

But whether couched in missive, song, or sign,
One close of lingering cadence Flavio read,
Nor read he wrongly — *Flavio, I am thine!*
Wherefore, his heart upon sweet symbols fed,
And with obedience, as to law divine,
With patience deep as passion — passion-bred,
He waited, certain endless nights and days,
The signal she was sure, at last, to raise.

With love-taught subtlety all circumspect
Of look, of act, now strove she to allay
Her brother's watchful ire, yet little recked
His greed for vengeance could a counter play.
If he her purpose did in part detect,
He deemed it would itself in full betray;
His own, the while, by cryptic pathways crept:
Each smiled on each, and both their counsel kept.

Ay, franker was his bearing than of late,
And tender — with the olden tenderness
That from their earliest childhood had its date.
And Cassia now believed the saints did bless
Her prayers that they this feud might all abate,
And those who warred, the mutual hand should press.
Thus, Fancy planned a little garden-ground
Of amities, with rose and myrtle crowned.

And, while she pondered much what means were best
To bring these flowers of peace to air and light,
One evening, ere the passion in the west
Died down to ashes on the plains of night,
Spake Ercole: "Tomorrow, at behest
Of our most Holy Father, I forthright
Must to Palermo fare. I freer go
Since on thy cheek once more the roses glow."

What would you? Duped by that which fair appears,
Victors have vailed to a retreating host;
The city of Amyclae shut her ears
To every warlike portent — and was lost!
Then, can we wonder if, in her young years,
Poor Cassia is on evil counsel tossed?
One day is theirs, one day and blessed eve;
Tomorrow may snatch back their scant reprieve!

So reasoned she, yet with a half mistrust
She reasoned ill. But old Adela showed
'Twere easy every matter to adjust,
And in her face the very zealot glowed:
"Ah, soon enough we all shall lie in dust;
But ere that time must golden hearts corrode —
Thy Flavio's, even his, my pretty one,
So that the will of Hate, not Heaven, be done?"

Much more she spake, as pertinent, as shrewd:
"Thou would'st not cross thy father's will, perhaps?
Know thou, thy brother keeps alive this feud.
Old age thy father's dragon-hatred saps,
And peace, to him, is all beatitude.
This strife must with this generation lapse.
Mark me, the Holy Tables nowhere say
Thou must thy brother, as thy sire, obey."

The signal passed. And when, at shut of day,
Again did Flavio take in hand the oar,
It seemed his boat alone did know the way,
Like those Phæacian barks of old, that bore
A voyager where'er his thought might sway,
Nor needed sail nor helmsman evermore.
Doubts he yon fragrant dark of leaning boughs,
Enshrines the living goal of all his vows?

O kindly Night, drop down a deeper veil,
That her descending feet confounded be!
O Winds arise, and with such force assail
His craft that it shall have no choice but flee
Like Autumn leaf before the tyrannous gale!
But no; the heavens are of cloud as free
As of a breeze the waters twilight-bland.
Hark! now a boat grates on the margin sand.

She hears, yet not alone she hears that sound —
But never can she dream that aught malign
Crosses her dusky Eden's happy bound!
Her heart beats high; her thoughts are transports fine;
Her words are — but in sighs let them be drowned
And blest exchanges of, "my own," and "thine." . . .
I dream a fable; since their lips met not,
But, like a bolt, their fate between was shot!

Not in Palermo lies the hest he chose;
To stratagem at home his powers are bent.
It was her brother Ercole. He rose
Like spirit from Dantean limbo sent,
Whom lust of vengeance leaveth no repose;
And through the dusk his glance flashed imminent.
With one swift sudden leap, he gains the boat,
That swerves around, and driven is afloat.

And they from out this human world depart!
Some say, was heard a cry of woe so keen
The listening stars might from their orbits start.
Save this, was nothing heard, and naught was seen.

Next morning bears strange news through court and mart,
But none so strange as truth, — so black, I ween.
An empty boat had lodged among the reeds, —
An oarless boat, festooned with waterweeds.

Now down they go with grappling iron and net,
And widely drag the sullen stream opaque.
The aged Boccanera now is met
With aged Corradini in heartache.
Too late forgoten is the feud that set
The sword between their houses, that must slake
In so much priceless blood its thirsty edge. . . .
Look, see! what draw they up, with silt and sedge?

As some old marbles of untold sad grace,
That now are niched in Rome's high citadel,
They draw them forth — the three, in death embrace,
As taking leave of Time with one farewell.
As though they spake in whisper, face to face,
Those mortal foemen now seemed fit to dwell
Immortal, since had vanished earthly feud,
That seeks to be in mutual blood imbrued.

But ah, ye fathers, of such sons bereft,
There yet remains a grief ye cannot flee.
What is this dagger buried to the heft?
What are these crimson stains ye needs must see?
That dagger hath the heart of Flavio cleft,
That dagger knew the hand of Ercole!
An ancient blade it is, with rubied hilt;
God wot, ere now, it hath been red with guilt!

Those fathers saw, with eyeballs dry and old,
A deeper horror. For, when Love took flight,
Vengeance, for Love, poor Cassia did enfold!
Just then, with arms so firm, so round, so white,
On slayer and on slain she so laid hold
That face to face their hates they seemed to plight.
Then, with mad force, the boat she overturned,
And quenched life's fire when it most fiercely burned.

A PORTRAIT BEFORE DEATH

(*From Whiteside's Translation, Beatrice Cenci, Storia del Secolo XVI.*)

SCENE.— a prison.

Persons: { BEATRICE, FARINACCI, *her advocate,* GUIDO RENI.

Enter Farinacci with Guido Reni dressed as a writer in the courts of justice.

BEATRICE.

Thou dost not need to say: "I bring no hope,"
Nor canst thou bring despair I have not known.

FARINACCI.

Lady, all intercession hath been vain:
The Pope is firm for death.

BEATRICE.

Do we all die?

FARINACCI.

Thy brother is absolved death-penalty.

BEATRICE.

Absolved from memory — would it might be!
He will be old in youth, with the sore load
Of all that he must bear, when these black days
Become his past — my dear — my little — brother!
Would Heav'n that he might all forget — ev'n me,
Though thus forgotten, I should go away,
Unloved, into the loveless Night of Time!

(*Suddenly observes Guido, who, seated at a little distance, is sketching rapidly.*)

But who is he that entered with thee, say!
Who is yon stranger? Wherefore does he watch
With looks that penetrate, that nothing miss?
There is no reason why I should be watched.
Surely, the doomed are from espial free!
He writes?

FARINACCI.

Nay, 'tis the Signor Guido Reni —
One midst the host of thy so helpless friends!
'Tis true, he watches thee with gaze intent,
For he would fix the image ere it fleets.
He begs to paint thy portrait. I to his
Add mine entreaty: Give to after-days
The sorrowful kind pleasure of quick tears,
In fancy fain to heap world-treasure up
For ransom of that most sweet face, those eyes,
We of thy time were impotent to save!
The art of Guido be thine advocate,
To win, hereafter, fairest thought of thee.

BEATRICE.

O, Signor Farinacci, be it done
According to thy wish. But Guido paints
No faces and no eyes like these, grief-drench'd;
The chrism of the Morning hath bedewed
His spirit, and the torch of Dawn is lent
Unto his hand. No subject I, for him, —
Already shadow-crossed and sealed to Night;
While darkness of deep infamy draws on. . . .

(*Guido approaches.*)

For how can after-days, with fable fed,
Instead of truth, know aught of Beatrice?
Yet if it be desired, then I will sit. . . .
And, if he pity me, as it may chance,
A great thing will I ask of him — (*aside*) ah, yes!

GUIDO.

If any, greatest of my craft, could paint
Thee as thou art, then should the gazer sigh:
"Would I had lived in those old cruel days;
My life to ransom hers I would have paid.
Ay, more, my soul immortal I had pledged
To sink where no light is, had hers been found
Allied to things of darkness!"

BEATRICE.

Yet, I die!
But if thine art Elysian thou wouldst lend
To such an one, from morn-light parted aye,
Haste thou thy gentle work. Few hours remain.

(*She sits, and Guido sketches.*)

O Guido Reni, must I seem to smile
As do the gracious faces, in old halls,
Of those who lived their full lives out, and died
In quietness, rounding a quiet life?

GUIDO.

(O, morn-light, undeserved of a base world,
Scarce granted, thou art bidden back to God!)

BEATRICE.

I know thou canst not paint me as I would,
To win me Pity's boon from after-days.

GUIDO.

Dear lady, how is that?

BEATRICE.

Didst thou not say
To things of darkness I was not allied?
Oh, they have crowded on me till I am,
Where'er I search, deep-grainèd with their hue!
Abhorent knowledge sinks its shade in me.
So, dread Petrella's dismal hanging rocks
Lend to lost little streams, that wind beneath,
The depth and darkness of an Acheron:
Omniscience of things evil, evil brings!
Canst thou paint mine and not their image, too?

(*Covers her face with her hands.*)

GUIDO (*to Farinacci.*)

Speak to her, thou her old, dear, trusted friend,
And tell her I but paint what I do see —
An angel — one that hath in Heaven her peer, —
That other Beatrice Dante saw
Midmost the Rose divine of paradise!

FARINACCI.

Oh, gentilezza, hearken now to me:
Remember thou the spirit-searching face
Which is our Dante's, — how, to some, it seemed
(While yet he lived) averted from all joy,
As though the torture of the Underworld,
And infamies of lost ones there confined,
Had been, by seeing, branded on his brow!
But we, who on the cunning portrait gaze,
Have clearer sight of bard and man than they
Who saw the living Dante. We behold
Compassion that no knowledge can bestow
Except it fathom depth as well as height.
That inwrought sense of evil and of base
Mars not the soul of Dante, looking forth
From those deep eyes, nor shall it mar thy soul,
When Guido's work shall be thine advocate
In potent silence — when we all are dust.

BEATRICE (*looking from one to the other*).

Shall I thus live, when I no longer live!
Thou strengthenest resolve in my sad heart.
Ye both will pardon my ungrateful weakness,
Delaying that which I so much desire.
Now, Signor Guido, turn I thus, — or thus?
I draw this mantle closer round my head.
Its folds, all white, perchance, shall be my shroud;
Or say that I, thus habited severe,
Do take on me strange vows no rubric knows, —
Of ghostly sisterhood no cloister knows.

FARINACCI.

(The childish heart-break veiled behind that look!)

GUIDO.

Sweet Patience, if, indeed, thou dost permit
The work of this, my unfit, willing hand,
Let not austerity thy features rule.

FARINACCI.

Nay, nay, for thus alone wert thou belied;
Think how would not be wanting ready lips
To say: "So all untouched by human ruth,
Thus Clytemnestra did the sleeper strike, —
Thus, Jael, — Judith — born avengers all!"
Lady, in nought art thou to these akin:
Soft is thy heart, that Fate did set her hand
To indurate; yet, long as it shall beat,
Its nature cannot change. Let, then, thy heart
Transfuse thy pictured face — to reach all hearts,
When Guido's work shall be thine advocate
In potent silence — when we all are dust!

GUIDO.

That tress — upon thy shoulder let it fall,
To say what wealth of loveliness in Youth
Was reckless shorn away in old-time; and,
If thou a little wouldst thine eyelids raise —

FARINACCI.

The tears forbid her! Freely let them come!

BEATRICE (*recovering herself.*)

I did not think the tears would come again,
But I, when Signor Guido spoke — how strange! —
Remembered something — something far and sweet
In childhood, — that my mother, chiding, spake, —
So lightly chiding me for downcast looks.
The tears were childhood's tears. I promise now,
That, like a quiet child, I will obey
Direction; so the portrait shall be sped.
So almost parted am I from this life,
And all its issues, that thy task would seem
The portrait of a portrait — and no more!

GUIDO.

To any that have known thee, never — never
Shalt thou from life and memory be withdrawn!

Be as thou now art, and forever so,
Till tint and fibre of this canvas yield
To the unseen consuming fire of Time!
Think of the eyes that shall encounter thine —
Oh, think a little of the tenderness
That would beseech thee (out of future days)
To heed their crystal tribute dropped for thee.
There! hold thy posture, — hold the thought thou hast,
(Whate'er it be) for now Heav'n lends a power
This brush hath rarely known. The work must live.

(*Guido paints; all three continuing some time silent. At length, Guido pausing, a look of great earnestness passes over the features of Beatrice.*)

FARINACCI.

Lady, there is a question thou would'st ask?

BEATRICE.

There is a question I would ask, ah, yes!
A favor I would crave. 'Tis a great thing.
Nor would I ask it, but that I believe,
O Signor Guido Reni, from thy words
Thou wilt not cease to pity me when gone, —
With those recorded, whom our country's law
Hastens to hide beneath the shuddering earth.

FARINACCI.

Ask, lady, whatsoe'er thou would'st, of him;
The artist is not greater than the man.

GUIDO.

Wilt thou but speak whate'er is in thy heart?

BEATRICE (*rises and slowly advances towards the canvas.*)

Then, would I this, but should it be too much —
(*Sees the portrait.*)
Ay, Guido's work shall be my advocate
In potent silence, when we all are dust!
Yet ere the portrait leave thy cunning hand,
To plead for me through all the days to come, —
(This is my question), when thou sign thy work
Then, as it were to countersign the work,
And that compassion lack no point of faith,
A something thou couldst add (and, pardon me,)
'Tis this — to write upon one angle, here,
(*Indicates with her finger.*)
Or here, perchance, one single word, — no more,
(*Writes with her finger.*)
Thus, — *Innocente.* . . . Guido, wilt thou write?

THE TRIUMPH OF FORGOTTEN THINGS

There is a pity in forgotten things,
  Banished the heart they can no longer fill,
Since restless Fancy, spreading swallow wings,
    Must seek new pleasure still!

There is a patience, too, in things forgot;
  They wait, — they find the portal long unused;
And knocking there, it shall refuse them not, —
    Nor aught shall be refused!

Ah, yes! though we, unheeding years on years,
  In alien pledges spend the heart's estate,
They bide some blessed moment of quick tears —
    Some moment without date —

Some gleam on flower, or leaf, or beaded dew,
  Some tremble at the ear of memoried sound
Of mother-song, — they seize the slender clew, —
    The old loves gather round!

When that which lured us once now lureth not,
  But the tired hands their gathered dross let fall,
This is the triumph of the things forgot —
    To hear the tired heart call!

And they are with us at Life's farthest reach,
  A light when into shadow all else dips,
As, in the stranger's land, their native speech
    Returns to dying lips!

MOBILITE.

Oh, ask me not wherefore I change, but see!
Change visits all thou lovest next to me;
From Nature's self I drew mine errant ways,
Her tides, her flowers, her veering lights and days!

Yet grieve not that I change; for change on change
Shall bring me back — 'tis but a circle's range!
Then wait me, for thou canst, so firm of soul;
Thou art my starting and my final goal.

THE CHILD HEART.

The summer sun may shrink the rill
Till all its course is crannied clay,
Yet in some green ridge far away
The fountain-head is welling still.

Such is his lot, whose youth is past —
Whose noon of life straightway departs,
If in his bribeless heart of hearts
His childhood dwells serene and fast.

The winds heroic news still bruit,
The woods enchanted murmur make,
And all the word that Nature spake
In his young ear grows never mute.

His childhood's God lives in the sky,
And breaks the seasons to the earth;
Day's new-blown fire, red evening's hearth
Wave wonder-scrolls before his eye.

Of all the flowers the round year brings
He loves the faint pearl-colored blooms,
That wear, through April's smiles and glooms,
Memorial looks of youngest springs.

He yet can find a relish keen
In foods and drinks his childhood sought,
In cups of milk, and honey brought
From hives within the forest green;

In berries speared on grassy bent,
Dusk berries from the bramble wastes:
In each and all of these he tastes
I know not what of deep content!

And never falls upon his ear
Such benison from Music's tongue
As in those hymns his mother sung
In summer twilights dim and dear!

The years no tenderness can steal;
Him as a child the shaft can wound;
But since his heart is true and sound,
Him as a child the balm can heal.

His joys and griefs, as they were wont,
Travel the same heart-avenues;
A vernal hope his step pursues —
The snowflakes gather on his front!

Old Time despairs to make him old,
And when from out the veilèd deep
The still Voice calleth him to sleep,
He as a child his eyes shall fold.

"A SNOW YEAR"

"What seest thou writ on winter's vasty scroll?"
"As white yon plain — so green spring tides shall roll!
As miserly the winter's clenchèd hand —
So free the summer's largess to the land!"

THE SEA AND THE STAR

The voice of the Sea on every shore
  And the gaze of the Star on every land —
They are one and the same forevermore —
  And this will the lover understand.
The voice of the Sea is the cry unstilled
  Till the craving heart shall find its rest;
And the gaze of the Star is love fulfilled
  And the peace that reigns in the constant breast.

THE DARK BEFORE DAWN

Oh, mystery of the morning gloam,
  Of haunted air, of windless hush!
Oh, wonder of the deepening dome —
  Afar, still far, the morning's flush!
My spirit hears, among the spheres,
  The round earth's ever-quickening rush!

A single leaf, on yonder tree,
  The planet's rush hath felt, hath heard,
And soon all branches whispering be;
  That whisper wakes the nested bird —
The song of thrush, before the blush
  Of Dawn, the dreaming world hath stirred!

The old moon withers in the East —
  The winds of space may drive her far!
In heaven's chancel waits the priest —
  Dawn's pontiff-priest, the morning star!
And yonder, lo! a shafted glow —
  The gates of Day-spring fall ajar!

THE DRYAD OF THE ORCHARD

Vainly, vainly have I sought her,
  Watching all the long bright daytime, —
She, the mossy Orchard's daughter,
  Waking only in the May-time!

Sleeps she null to winter's rigor,
  Null to frost or sleet-wind's scourges;
Draws with buds a hidden vigor,
  And with opening buds emerges.

When the blossoms crowd in wonder,
  On the branches gnarled and hoary,
And the grass grows long thereunder,
  Then she comes in baffling glory!

There be those that do attend her,
  And they list to do her pleasure;
She hath touched them with her splendor,
  And hath given joy past measure:

One — the oriole, darting quickly,
  (Voice of rapture clear Elysian!)
Glimpsed through flower glooms crowding thickly,
  Flame bright, wingèd, fleeting vision!

Elfland minstrels, too, are bidden,
  And they share her nectared chalice, —
Forest swarm or hive bees, hidden
  In her flower-wove hanging palace.

These attend and serve her ever, —
  Vainly, vainly I have sought her;
Though I watch, I see her never, —
  She, the mossy Orchard's daughter!

À PEU PRÈS

Thy palace walls were founded well,
  And well its courses thou didst lay;
One tower defied the genie's spell,
  And stands a ruin to this day.

The Land of Flowers thou didst attain,
  And see the spring's immortal jet;
Thy staff-worn hand was reached in vain —
  Thy lips that crystal never wet!

With pains the altar thou didst dress,
  And the burnt sacrifice prepare,
And call upon the God to bless —
  All but the Fire from Heaven was there!

Thou shak'st thy lance on hard-fought field,
  Thou sleep'st, the tingling stars above; —
Pity and praise sweet eyes can yield,
  But ne'er vouchsafe the Light of Love!

What does thou lack? 'Tis almost naught
  That parts thee from thy Heart's Desire, —
A step — a span — an airy thought:
  A pulse-beat more, thou didst require!

"CLEAVE TO THINE ACRE"

My neighbor was a forester
  And ranged with bow and spear;
I was a simple gardener,
  And delved the whole round year.

Time came when both a-weary were,
  And both resolved on change;
So he became a gardener,
  And I the woods did range.

The seed springs never to the light, —
  He chides the soil, the air!
The forest genii, in despite,
  Adrift mine arrows bear!

Folk say the woods be full of deer,
  The wild-flowers praise the soil:
But flower nor game, the whole round year,
  Rewards our alien toil.

THE UNLEAFED BEECH

If any say that Beauty parts from thee
When frost and wind thy summer honors steal,
Stand forth, O Beech, that such an one may see
Beauty as great thy leafage did conceal!

Lo, thou, the West Wind's lithe antagonist,
Art quick to strife, but when his force is spent,
As in a garment meshed of autumn mist
Thy branches sleep in silver-gray content.

By all the crowning summers thou hast shed,
By all thy well-fought winters, dauntless Tree,
Drop benisons upon thy lover's head,
And share thy strength, thy grace, thy hope, with me!

THE SPRINGS OF LONG AGO

Come near, O Sun, O South wind, blow!
And be the Winter's captives freed.
Where are the Springs of long ago?

Drive underground the lingering snow,
And forth the green sward legions lead;
Come near, O Sun, O South wind, blow!

Are these the skies we used to know,
The budding wood, the fresh blown mead?
Where are the Springs of long ago?

The breathing furrow now we sow,
And patient wait the patient seed;
Come near, O Sun, O South wind, blow!

The grain of vanished years will grow,
But not thy vanished years, indeed!
Where are the Springs of long ago?

With sodden leafage lying low,
They for remembrance faintly plead.
Come near, O Sun, O South wind, blow!
Where are the Springs of long ago?

AN EASTER FANTASY

I

In England, on an Easter-tide,
Beneath a budding forest-side,
And in a grassy meadow wide,
To me a vision came.
The quick-grown blades like velvet showed,
And at their airy summits glowed
The primrose' yellow flame.

II

The hills stood back in tender mist;
The pleasure-laden wind said, "List!"
I could have bent me down and kissed
Those flower-lips dashed with dew:
But as I stooped, a sigh began —
The green and gold together ran,
And dim the meadow grew.

III

And of the dimness and the sigh
A voice arose that was a cry;
A radiant shadow trembled by,
With wide and sunny hair.
"Who art thou then, whom leaf and flower
Salute, and with their beauty dower? —
Thy name and race declare!"

IV

" I am that Eostre whom of eld
The Light of all the World dispelled:
'Twas here my festival was held
With heart-abounding mirth.
Of me, there lingers but the name,
And, of my smile, this primrose flame
Low down along the earth! "

A COCOON

Willow buds in burnished sheath,
And the fruit tree's snowy wreath —
All are safely shut away,
Waiting till the touch of May.

Other life as fair as theirs
In the long, long waiting shares,
Shut in cell of hodden gray,
Waiting till the touch of May.

While the blasts of winter sweep,
Here strange beauty lies asleep;
Closed alike to frost and sun —
House and bed and garment one.

But when prisoned leaf-buds fling
Their light banners to the spring,
In the selfsame joyous hour
Shall go forth a wingèd flower.

THE BURDEN OF AGE

"Ah, how the years exile us into dreams!"
— *Walter Carey.*

There is a dancing in the morning beams,
There is a rainbow sown amid the dew,
There is a glint of gold shot through the sands,
A molten sapphire in the mountains' hue,
And Hope down comes with all her singing bands.
Nay, nay, it is not so; 'twas long ago!
There *was* a dancing in the morning beams:
Ah, how the years exile us into dreams!

There is a glamour in the moon's white gleams,
There is the touch that charmed Endymion's eyes,
A spirit mounting from the clod and stone,
A spirit bending from the bending skies —
And Love in midst of all sets up his throne!
Nay, nay, it is not so; 'twas long ago!
There *was* a glamour in the moon's white gleams:
Ah, how the years exile us into dreams!

There is a wonder-light on woodland streams,
A murmur in the green o'erhanging boughs,
A rustle in the fronded ranks of fern —
And, lo! the Muse with rapt enwreathèd brows,
And eyes that seen and unseen things discern!
Nay, nay, it is not so; 'twas long ago!
There *was* a wonder-light on woodland streams:
Ah, how the years exile us into dreams!

Some other world, perchance, our loss redeems, —
Light to dead eyes and speech to lips all dumb
Brings back, — brings us and ours from banishment!
So may our dreams a living joy become;
But here all things that are, with doubt are blent,
Within the mists that blow from long ago!
Some other world, not this, our loss redeems:
Ah, how the years exile us into dreams!

IN PENUMBRA

Now have I reached the day's extremest bound,
Now into shadow all the shadows creep;
And, while the night's full cup o'erflows around,
I die the death of Sleep.

A little more — to Life's extremest bound;
A deeper shade the shadows gathereth;
And, while the night, exhaustless, flows around,
I sleep the sleep of Death.

ART IN A SORDID AGE

As one who strives a pittance to amass,
Vending some trifle that none keeps nor seeks,
So in a sordid age is Art, alas!
And all she wins, of veilèd pity speaks.

TO A FLORENTINE DIAL

Perchance, oft did San Marco's monk austere,
Or Donatello, watch thy style's advance:
Now, from what star, their day our circling year,
Our earth their dial, darts their sphery glance?

THE MEDITATION OF AN EARLY CHRISTIAN

To that great Light that shone from Nazareth,
Who best discerned the things of Life, of Death,
Who taught us, first and last, that love for man
Avails where naught else can,

Who gave the Law, *To others do as ye*
Yourselves would be done by — I make my plea,
(And pardon grant, that oft I strove, and failed,
To show how Love availed!)

For this I found — full often found, in sooth —
The precious things of justice and of truth
And faith fraternal which, past all, I sought,
By men were deemed as naught;

Since better did they love to be beguiled
With glozing words and flatteries smoothly filed,
And little did they crave that I should do
The deed I deemed most true.

I gave them what I daily prayed might be
In human love apportioned unto me —
What had been meat, to fill my hungering lot;
In vain! it fed them not.

And now, I see it is not counted good
To do to others save as *others* would.
Lord, in what manner should one hold
Thy Law surnamed of Gold?

THE SOUL UNWEARIED

Weary were feet with the race of the day,
Weary were eyes from their watch on the way,
Weary the breast, with the heart knocking fast,
And I groped for the door of Dark Peace,
That waiteth all pilgrims at last.

To my Soul all alone in the waste I then spake:
"I am tired, and my farewell of Time I would take:
Flee with me hence from this scene undesired,
Flee with me hence, O my Soul,
For, even as I, thou art tired!"

Then the voice of my Soul all alone filled the waste:
"Flee hence, or abide — as thou wilt — as thou mayst;
But I — lo, I tire not, and never shall tire,
If within or without thee I dwell —
Thou bondslave to Time and Desire!"

Back from the door of Dark Peace I recoiled,
Crying: "If Time hath not marred thee, nor foiled —
If thou tire not, I tire not, thou, O my Soul!"
Then on, from that moment, I pressed,
And ever press on, to the goal.

THE LITTLE SISTER

I

The sighing trees — they all stood round, —
  Their friendly arms around me cast;
The brook with mingled shadow-sound
  Of laughter and of sobbing passed;
The bank whereon I lay was spread
  With small soft mosses, thick and deep;
The faint breeze stooped above my bed . . .
These spake with one accord, and said:
  " Our Little Sister, — let her weep, —
    Hush, let her weep! "

II

Their voices all afar withdrew
  What time the tears ran free and fain . . .
Those tears the mosses drank as dew,
  Those tears the brook received as rain;
For tears the trees their balsam shed,
  Then took my heart, my grief, to keep,
And gave their griefless calm instead.
And once again all spake, and said:
  " Our Little Sister — let her sleep, —
    Hush, let her sleep! "

WHITE CLOVER

" What, here, thou tender thing, on fire's black path,
'Mid desolation which thy comrades shun? "
" For this I came — to hide the signs of scath,
And shield the sad, bare soil from summer's sun."

" Then will I give thee to that human flower
Who, when all others flee the gathering gloom,
Runs thither in misfortune's darkest hour,
And fills the world with sweetness and with bloom."

AT THE CATAMOUNT TAVERN

Gone is the couchant stealth of the mountain,
And the burning eye from dell and cavern;
Their effigy gone from the tavern doorway —
And gone the Catamount Tavern.

But in the days that are long since numbered,
In the days that were bold, and brave, and hardy,
Fierce was the wild, and fearless the hunter,
And his rifle aim not tardy.

Then was there roof for steed and rider;
Then was there zest for the tale of the ranger,
And the table was spread, and the fire was stirred,
For the cheer of friend or stranger.

Those were the days of a land divided —
Cry of " Rebel! " and shout of " Tory! " —
Those were the days of a wild-fire spreading —
Days of the making of story!

Then, 'neath the bristling sign of the portal
The landlord welcomed the steaming rider,
With cheeks as red as the apple distilled
In his brimming flagons of cider.

Now at the taunt of the British Major
A redder hue on his cheek was burning: —
" Landlord, see that our dinner is ready,
For soon shall we be returning! "

Wroth was old Stephen Fay at this gibing, —
Too angry to answer the taunt, was old Stephen:
" Oh, if, as once, I could handle yon musket,
We, before night, should be even! "

For this was Bennington's red-letter morning
(This in the days of the making of story);
And the heights around did for hours resound
With the firing of rebel and tory.

Down Bennington Hill, when long were the shadows,
With a sorry remnant returned the Major, —
Major and men with pinioned arms,
All silent, sadder, and sager.

And Stephen Fay of the Catamount Tavern,
With a voice that was clear, and a gaze that was steady,
Stood at his doorway with smiling welcome,
" Your dinner, sirs, is ready! "

THE BANNERED STREET

I have beheld between dark woods, each way,
The crimson strata of the eastern sky,
While, gazing on the earth with keen survey,
The candid stars still kept their watch on high.

Borne swift along the roadways of the town
I have beheld a pageant all as fair:
Each side the walls of granite seemed to frown,
While sunrise colors took the buoyant air.

The gleaming vista of the bannered street!
What pride, what joy of hope, it stirs in me,
Kindles the eye, quickens the pulse's beat —
My Country, it is morning-time with thee!

Who deems that thou hast reached thy full estate?
Great as thou art, thou must yet greater be;
Thy banner's daybreak-colors point thy fate —
My Country, 'tis but morning-time with thee!

ON THE EVE OF WAR

"Ancestral voices prophesying war."

THE MAN SPEAKS

When torpid stands the blood of civic life,
What shall revivify but armèd strife?

THE WOMAN

The call to arms but calls your bravest brave —
Ye lose but that which it were Life to save!

THE MAN

When outland insults press the Sovereign State,
What shall avenge but War, — what vindicate?

THE WOMAN

Who shall avenge the dead that War hath slain, —
The mingled valor of the blood-drench'd plain?

THE MAN

The cry of Mars upon the citadel! —
I would be hence, the mustering throng to swell!

THE WOMAN

I, with Saturnia, breathing mist, would go, —
To blind and stay the feet of friend and foe!

THE SEA-FIGHT

"Hush, sprinkle the decks with sand; for blood will soon be shed! —*S. R. Elliott.*

I

Nearer the dark ships draw together, like birds of prey,
Nearer and nearer we circle and wheel, ere we close for the fray!
They should be friends, who shall meet on the desolate waste of the deep —
Friends! from the throats of our giant guns our welcome shall leap,
Yours be not slow to reply; and, at length, we shall understand!
(*Hush, sprinkle the deck with sand!*)

II

How fair is the dawn of the day, how calm is the measureless sea!
Is there anywhere token of pity or foresight of horror to-be?
Soon, on the flash, shall follow the thunder's reverberant tread,
Soon, ah, how soon, my comrades, the crest of the wave shall blush red!
But we — we are trimmed for the fight, and ready we wait the command!
(*Hush, sprinkle the deck with sand!*)

III

Here, when we fall, O my comrades, under the shattering fire,
Here on no tender sward the flickering life shall expire;
Here shall no soothing murmur from forest or farmland be borne,
Speeding the soul with a dream out of Childhood dreaming at morn;
But afar we shall die from the mothering Earth and our own native Land.
(*Hush, sprinkle the deck with sand!*)

IV

Lest in the welter of blood one should fall on the slippery floor,
The avid dust shall drink the costly libation we pour!
Is it dust from the shores of home? — we will slake its thirst with a will;
Each drop as it mingles therewith shall be conscious of fealty still!
Sworn were we ever to this — now the hour and the test are at hand!
(*So! sprinkle the deck with sand!*)

THE BRONZES OF EPIRUS

Wherefore, Athena, with the brows severe,
Wherefore forever lackest thou the spear?
O sacred Zeus, thy sceptre — vanished where,
Where, Delphic One, thy bow high-poised in air?

With scornful lip the Bronzes seemed to speak:
" And ask ye this, of us? Those soldiers seek
(If ye in dust may find their base-knit clay)
Who our eternal symbols bore away.
Go, ask the Roman hireling why we stand
Devoid of gifts and of the giving hand!

" What deity could yield, their sordid grasp
Did for a little lifetime vilely clasp;
But us they left, in moldering earth forgot
Until an age that knows and worships not
Hath reared us up, and bade its world behold
What dreams of beauty brake the sleep of them of old!

" See that ye do not thus, yourselves, today, —
Ignore the God, while ye his gifts purvey."

THE FULL CUP

Look! this fragile cup may hold
Either draught of liquid gold,
Rippling from a warmer age,
Or the hemlock of the sage!
Be it cordial, be it bane,
That is poured for man to drain,
Equally this facile cup
Would be filled and rounded up.

Such, O human heart, must be —
Such the chalice formed for thee,
Which thy Fate and Genius fill
With such madness as they will;
But whate'er the cup contains,
Thou wouldst drink it to the drains!
'Tis not what the cup may hold, —
'Tis its fullness makes thee bold.

Drinking — thou wouldst meet thy foe,
And his spirit, with a blow,
Like a flint-shed spark, efforce
From the unremembering corse;
Thou wouldst desolate the world,
Yet thy challenge would be hurled
(Though the Furies should await), —
"I have no regret, — I *hate!*"

Drinking — thou, for Love, wouldst bear
Servile toil, and fetters wear;
And if Pity came thy way,
Thou wouldst smile on her, and say:
"Thee and thine I live above;
I have no regret — I *love!*"
'Tis not what the cup may hold, —
'Tis its fullness makes thee bold.

THE BIRDS' LOVER

He has conned the speech of birds
And can give it human words;
He has every call by rote,
And can answer note for note.
On the forest edge he stands;
Palm to palm he lays his hands,
And with whistled challenge clear
Bids the forest folk appear.
Many a shy, dark-loving sprite
Then will leave its greenwood night,
Flitting on from spray to spray,
Into unaccustomed day:
Fluttering wings and answering song
Follow, follow him along!

He has conned those legends old
By the birds' own brothers told
(Brothers of the birds are they
Who the Muses' call obey);
He can tell you why the swallow
New, oblivious joys would follow;
Why the nightingale is fair
With sweet Sorrow to remain;
Why by streams that greet the sea
Ever stays Alcyone!
These dim legends he can tell;
Later lore he knows as well:
He hath news from lands afar,
Where the chosen havens are
Of the redbreast and the thrush.

When the winter here saith "Hush!"
Least and greatest bring him word,
From the crane to humming-bird;

This, from mild Floridian shore,
That, from sun-gilt Salvador!
Time of nests and time of broods,
Singing-tides, and songless moods,
These he marks in order due;
And he marks the season, too,
When the goldfinch casts away
Winter-coat of ashen gray.
He the snowy owl hath found
Shedding slumber all around,
And the oven-bird's low nest
'Mid the shadows it loves best;
And when wild fowl southward go,
Dark across the afterglow,
He the hieroglyph can read
Which they trace as on they speed.

To the birds he is akin;
More and more his thought they win:
Birdlike are his motions light,
Birdlike are his glances bright,
Birdlike is his voice — ah, well!
He some day with birds may dwell
(Changed, as in those fables old,
Kinfolk of the birds have told);
On some autumn eve unknown,
Far with them he will have flown,
And immortal will be crowned —
Since no dead bird have we found!

TRANSMIGRANTS

It was the Life beyond all life,
  It was the World all worlds beyond;
And there was neither doubt nor strife,
  And there was neither bar nor bond.
For other Light than of the sun
  Arose, the lilied fields to bless;
And mortal day-and-night was done,
  And mortal grief and heaviness.
But two, from earth transmigrant bound, —
  The Soul of Her, the Soul of Him, —
Some broken links of Memory found,
  As down they stooped to Lethe's brim.

" So thou wast not my bounden foe,
  But shouldst have been, on earth, my mate;
How many times thou gav'st the blow
  That sent me through the Hidden Gate! "
"And thou? — thou wast not, then, my foe,
  But shouldst have been, on earth, my mate!
How, other times, thou gav'st the blow
  That sent me through the Hidden Gate! "

" Once, Vestal, thou didst make the sign
  That on my lips stark silence set — "
" Samnite, that dying look of thine
  My soul could nevermore forget!
But thou, amidst the chariots' rush
  In the great Siege didst strike me down — "
" Pucelle, thy cry no years could hush,
  No clang of after-wars could drown!

Once, on the gleaming steppe I died,
Thine exile in the frosty zone — "
" The wind, that round my casement sighed
Forever brought thy passing moan!
Once breathed on me a slanderous breath,
Within an oubliette was I pent — "
" I looked upon thy face in death
And knew thee surely innocent!
But yesteryear, ay, yesterday,
My life, a wreck upon thy sea,
Wide open to all ruin lay — "
" Spirit, that wrong drove sleep from me!
Thou, too! — the hour is scarcely past,
When, like a reed, thou brok'st my heart,
And like a reed away didst cast — "
" For that, mine lodged this lethal dart! "

" So, thou wast not my bounden foe,
But shouldst have been, on earth, my mate:
No more I strike the killing blow,
No more thy hand shall be my fate! "
"Ay, thou wast not my bounden foe —
Thou shouldst have been, on earth, my mate;
But we no more to earth shall go,
And Knowledge dawns on us too late! "

This in the Life beyond all life,
This, in the World all worlds beyond. . . .
Then, Memory grew a sheathèd knife,
And there was neither bar nor bond!

AT LETHE'S BRINK

I

Ye souls, of life too fond,
Why seek to carry memory to the shades, —
Those blessed seats in the deep meads and glades?
For me, I have been bond
To griefs too many, and to joys too fierce:
Let neither with remembrance longer pierce!
Lead me, Caducean wand,
Where the green turf with Lethe-dew is wet;
There, my burnt, throbbing temples will I steep;
I would forget . . .
Oh, let me sink in the Great Deep of Sleep!

II

Why would ye beckon dreams?
To set the thorn, where never grew the thorn?
To make sweet rest a mockery forlorn?
To give the silent streams
Of this fair, twilight Country, where we go,
The burden of the song we too well know?
To feign the hot noon beams
Strike the bow'd head (where noon came never yet)?
Far, far from me the soothless dream-throng keep!
I would forget . . .
Oh, let me sink in the Great Deep of Sleep!

III

Ay, bid adieu to all;
Nor grieve that one, the sweetest, stays behind.
Be deaf unto his cries; and be ye blind
To looks that would enthrall;
For Love, most far of all the clamant throng
That held the fevered hands of Life so long,
Follows with haunting call:
Hence, most of all, to him the bound be set —
Between us, thrice the lustral waters creep!
I must forget . . .
Oh, let me sink in the Great Deep of Sleep!

IV

But ye; why doubt to drink, —
Ye spirits that from many a land and zone
Of the wide earth, with me are hither blown, —
Why stand ye at the brink
A timorous throng, who, erewhiles, have besought
That ye might cease from toils, from strife, from thought?
Why, therefore, do ye shrink?
Follow, and quaff with closèd eye; and let
The sight draw inward, while the shadows sweep. . . .
I would forget . . .
And now . . . I sink in the Great Deep of Sleep.

LOVE UNUTTERED

As if, within the sylvan center of the land,
There were a nameless lake no sail had ever fanned;
As if amidst that lake a wooded island showed;
As if within that isle a spring in silence flowed;
As if, within a dell this spring kept ever green,
A flower shot forth; as if within the flower, unseen,
A drop of dew reposed — so many times removed,
So secret, and so safe, so lone and all unproved,
Is Love Unuttered! In the constant heart it lies,
All darkling, fresh and pure, as night-dew from the skies,
Ere yet it meets the ardent morning's thousand eyes.

THE DEAD BIRTHDAY

Lo, how they all return unto the light,
The flowers that slept but late the winter sleep!
They feel the sun of spring is at its height;
And through the clods their arrowy path they keep.

Lo, how they all return! but thou, but thou
(Lover of theirs, and loved of them, I deem),
Thou goest hence, descending darkward now,
While they, unwitting, seek the vernal beam.

And it may be, that they will heedless run,
And fling fresh bloom above thy closèd door;
But — thou beyond the quest of air and sun —
Full handfuls I shall bring to thee no more.

No more, as in this month that held thy birth,
I brought them, with a song for May and thee!
Thou hast no longer any years on earth;
And the lost day, henceforth, no song for me.

THE THROBBING OF THE AIR

I

Thither, my heart!
(Thou, so long blind,
Thou, so long grieving apart!)
Thither, where marginless rivers of tremulous air
Over the far, green, happy meadows wind,
Thither carry thy quest, my heart, and find
What Other Heart is beating there!

II

Thou hast questioned the Dawn
And the deep-browed Night, —
Still, the veil was undrawn!
Now, ask thou of kindred things the long-sought boon:
The dark and the dim were not kindred — but Fervor and Light.
Seek thou what Other Heart, half-veiled to thy sight,
Beats in the glowing candor of Noon!

THE COURAGE OF THE LOST

There be who are afraid to fear,
  The myrmidons of Hope!
Their watchword cannot lend me cheer
  'Gainst that with which I cope!

There is a courage of the lost,
  Who sail uncharted seas,
Past many a firm, or flying coast,
  And I must sail with these.

There is a valor of the slain,
  Who strive past mortal sight
While their spent corses strew the plain,
  And I must fight their fight.

Hast thou that courage of the lost,
  Past theirs, that reach their goal?
Whoe'er thou art, I thee accost —
  Thou Comrade of my Soul!

Thou dost not fear to fear — ah, no!
  The depths wilt thou descend;
And when thy planet sinketh low
  Wilt make of Night a friend!

Then come! We two are proof, at last,
  We dare our fears to own;
But had our lot with Hope been cast
  What heart-break had we known!

AVALON — FAIR AVALON

Now, while the leaf-flocks rise upon the wind,
Now, while the grass-blade blanches with the frost,
Find we that Isle (of yore not hard to find) —
Refuge of all sweet things in old time lost!
Out of a world that grows austere and bleak,
'Tis Avalon — fair Avalon I seek!

Thou wilt not trust that such a realm may be?
In the mid-rapture of her Perfect Day,
Did Summer never whisper unto thee:
" Follow where undivided is my sway! "
Thus, to my spirit, did the Summer speak —
And Avalon — fair Avalon I seek!

I heard the farewell vesper of the thrush,
The meadow-haunting plover's last *good-night;*
The floating call, amid the twilight hush,
Of wild fowl, that would thither wing their flight:
Weak, though they be, their courage is not weak;
And I — fair Avalon I, also, seek!

Why cling to unleafed grove and leafless field?
Why linger till the dearth of wintry hours?
Why bear the wound that may be closed and healed
With balm nepenthean pressed from wizard flowers,
While thornless roses pillow thy pale cheek?
'Tis Avalon — fair Avalon I seek!

There be so many there of dear esteem —
There be so many there that were storm-tossed,
That ventured all for sake of some great Dream;
And there they found what they had deemed was lost!
O Isle of all desire, from days antique —
'Tis Avalon — fair Avalon I seek!

THE DANCE OF THE SEASONS

'Twas Winter, but one moment past, —
Autumn, — so little time gone by;
Ere that, the Summer, — Spring! — how fast,
How fast the circling Seasons fly!

They dance to music strange! — I sigh,
Borne on, amidst their giddy round;
Forever will they whirl, — but I
Some day with them shall not be found!

SONNETS

NEW HORIZONS

There are horizons for the wistful soul
Compelled in narrow heritage to bide:
I saw the sunset from the riverside;
Then straight I climbed a little flame-lit knoll,
And there beheld the golden chariot roll
Through cloudy splendors, bannered pageants wide.
Then, from my chamber, I once more descried
The fervid wheel turning the western goal.

And last, my mountain in the east resigned
Her bright tiara borrowed from the sun.
Now, air and earth were merged in eventide,
And I, with them, in peace, while something sighed:
"Put thoughts of far adventure from thy mind;
Try *heights* for new horizons, restless one!"

A THANKFUL SOJOURNER

"One world at a time." — *Thoreau.*

O ye, whose spirit-sight, more keen than mine,
A sovran signal doth from far descry,
Monitions clear, and grace to live thereby —
Freeholders of a city all divine;
Who see another luminary shine
Behind the orb that fills with light yon sky —
Pardon a childlike, wonder-widened eye,
Pleased with but tokens of the Great Design!

Pardon! — He pardons me, I rest secure,
He who this world and all worlds did create, —
(Even that other world which ye discern),
He pardons me my joy, so warm and pure,
In this, His lovely earth, our gracious state,
Where, thankful, for a time I do sojourn.

THE TIDE OF THE PAST

Sometimes the troubled tide of all the Past
Upon my spirit's trembling strand is rolled;
Years never mine — ages an hundredfold,
With all the weight those ages have amassed
Of human grief and wrong, are on me cast.
Within one sorcerous moment I grow old,
And blanch as one who scarce his way can hold,
Upon a verge that takes some flood-tide vast.
Then comes relief through some dear common thing:
The voices of the children at their play;
The wind-wave through bright meadows, moving fast;
The bluebird's skyward call, on happy wing:
So the sweet Present reassumes her sway;
So lapse the surges of the monstrous Past.

THE BLESSED PRESENT

Pluck me yon rose, but say not: "'Twill not last!"
Or that "Tomorrow's rose may be more sweet."
Say not, the darling bird I hear, will fleet
When its green summer home yields to the blast.
This moment, freed from Fear, that shrank aghast—
From Hope, that ran on wing'd, mercurial feet,
I, Sovereign of the Present, hold my seat!
All smile on me, and smiles on all I cast.
Oh, hitherto, my love, I have been thrall
To the old Past, dim ringing with regret;
Or else, uncertain days of bliss to-be
Made me all restless with their veering call:
But thou bestowest wealth I ne'er had yet —
The blessed Present thou dost bring to me!

THE NESTING-PLACE

When back upon the soft south wind they roam,
Mark how each bird, by instinct subtly willed,
Erelong begins to seek where it shall build:
High in the elm the oriole makes her home;
Beneath the eaves the swallow shapes the loam;
The house-wren's note all day is never stilled;
The little finch's heart with joy is filled,
To find a hollow with a grassy dome.
Dost think the birds alone have this fine art,
To know and choose what place for each is best,
And there return and find a sheltering nest,
Howe'er abroad in roving sport they dart?
I, too, have a wise spirit in my breast,
I would not build at all except within thy heart!

RECEPTIVITY

O all ye boundless powers of light and air,
That break the morning to a wistful world,
That tint with rose the column slow upcurled
From homely hearths of men — it is your care
To see refreshment poured out everywhere, —
Each one of million flowers with dew impearled,
And breathe the soul of flight to wings close furled:
Glad must ye be, such gifts abroad to bear.
Yet, ah! the little flower with brimful urn,
The wakened bird that now resumes its song,
How glad are they with merely being blest!
They need do nothing more. From them I learn
How simply sweet it is, the whole day long —
My Love, within the bounty of thy love to rest!

WHEN, MUSE?

When, Muse, when shall the wondrous time revive,
That sees the withered sward of Hippocrene
With recreating dew of song grow green,
And the dry thorns Pierian blush alive, —
Break forth in bloom that draws the murmuring hive?
When, when shall youthful acolytes be seen
Urging some poet-peer of silvery mien
To sing for them — enchained in sportive gyve?
For now, with pipes untuned are we content,
With soulless themes diurnal that discard
The long-descended priesthood of the bard;
So rarely now, a trembling ear is lent
Unto the sires of song, whose brows are starred,
Whose alien music dieth heavenward.

REVIVAL OF ROMANCE

Too long, too long we keep the level plain,
The tilled, tame fields, the bending orchard bough!
The byre, the barn, the threshing-floor, the plow
Too long have been our theme and our refrain!
Enough, my brothers, of this Doric strain!
Lift up your spirits, and record a vow
To gather laurel from the mountain's brow,
And bring the era of rich verse again!
Ye painters, paint great Nature at her height —
Seas, forests, cliffs upreared in liquid air,
And touch with glamour all things rough and crude.
And ye who fiction weave for our delight,
Give us brave men, and women good as fair —
And shame our hollow Sadducean mood!

REPROOF FROM THE MUSE

To me this voice from far Pieria came:
"Choose any theme. There's nothing great or small
But on its head eternal light shall fall,
Nor any land so summitless and tame,
But shall be winnowed by the wings of Fame,
If one of mine be there, to disenthrall
The soul, and join it with the Soul of All,
That giveth crystal sight and tongues of flame.
I hear thy low repinings. Thine the fault,
If nothing near thee moves thy breast to song:
Thy mornings are new-lit, thine evenings starred,
Thy wind-blown forests are with joy exalt,
Thy threshold birds are singing all day long —
Not thou dost lack a Theme, but these a Bard!"

THE LIFE-MASK OF KEATS

Whether, uplifting slow his dreamful head,
He leaves a couch the fragrant pine has strown,
Whether the dim, enchanted woods have known
The sleeper's unimperiled velvet tread;
Or whether, through some winding cavern led,
That, like the shell, rings drear with ocean's moan,
He wanders till the sea, wide, bright, and lone,
Beneath his visionary eye is spread —
Whether awake, or still by slumber bound,
Behold that shepherd with a world foregone,
To hoard the white rays of a mystic Dawn, —
A listener to aërial silver sound,
With subtle moonlight smile devote, withdrawn, —
Behold Endymion, whom a Love unknown hath crowned!

THE BREATH OF HAMPSTEAD HEATH

The wind of Hampstead Heath still burns my cheek
As, home returned, I muse, and see arise
Those rounded hills beneath the low, gray skies,
With gleams of haze-lapped cities far to seek.
These can I picture, but how fitly speak
Of what might not be seen with searching eyes,
And all beyond the listening ear that lies,
Best known to bards and seers in times antique?
The winds that of the spirit rise and blow
Kindle my thought, and shall for many a day,
Recalling what blithe presence filled the place,
Of one who oftentimes passed up that way,
By garden-close and lane where boughs bend low,
Until the breath of Hampstead touched his face.

THE GRAVE OF KEATS

I have beheld that grave, with violets dim,
In the great Cæsars' City where he sleeps:
And, over it, a little laurel sweeps,
Fruited and leafed eternally for him;
Not far away, a pine, of sturdier limb.
Leaf, flower, and grass the mellow sunlight steeps,
And this dear grave! Ah, how the soul upleaps,
The breath comes tremblingly, and the eyes swim!

In dreams that bordered close the sleep of death,
He felt the blowing flowers above his breast:
This moment I behold a wondrous thing —
These blossoms, stirring in the wind's light breath,
Do they not feel (above all violets blest)
The ever-vital dust from whence they spring!

OLD-WORLD BRIDGES

How many bridges in how many a land
These feet of mine at varying pace have crossed!
The blue-green Reuss, chilled thro' with Alpine frost,
By ancient beam and pictured rafter spanned,
Where the quaint Musegg and Lucerna stand;
Or Ponte Vecchio, with its shops embossed,
Where Arno, soon in violet distance lost,
Weaves on and outward to the Tyrrhene strand. —
Yet, ever as I crossed, with me there crossed
Spirits of other time, — an urgent band:
Swart men-at-arms, princes of proud command;
And then, as if to foil that austere host,
Would pass some musing lover's tender ghost,
Or child and mother, linkèd hand in hand.

THE DUOMO

(FLORENCE)

Twilight the hour. How doubly twilight here,
Where early blent are roof and architrave
(As in a mountain hollowed to a cave),
And ev'n the glance of noonday is austere!
Now, what reverberations fill the ear,
As though commingling storm and torrent gave
Some waste place speech, or prophet message clave,
For the first time, a desert vast and drear!
Source of the sounds, beyond the altar high, —
A preaching monk. His burden he repeats:

"Gesú e' Cristo!" How his accents thrill,
As, in the wild, the first evangel cry! . . .
And still, I hear them, 'midst the murmuring streets,
In twilight Florence, medieval still.

THE CATHEDRAL MURMUR

(COLOGNE)

There is a murmur of the ocean cave,
  A dream-of-sound of far-retiring seas;
  There is a whisper of the legion trees,
  In long uprolling, long receding wave:
Through both is heard one Voice, insistent, grave.
  And there is utterance akin to these:
  Hark how it rises, deepens, by degrees,
  Until it floods the vast cathedral nave!
It seems, at first, a ringing in the ear,
  Organic rhythm from the pulses cast;
  But soon the listener in awe will start,
For he the lingering orisons shall hear —
  The choral sigh, of all who, in the past,
  Here bent the knee, here gave the broken heart!

THE CAVES OF THE COVENANTER

Here is no altar, here no aislèd nave;
Nor chantry for the hymns of heaven; nor stall
For prayer retired, nor high, impictured wall;
Not such to you the Great Commander gave.
Yours the rough waste, the winding rift and cave;
Yours the cold springs that unseen rise and fall,
And yours the purple heather mantling all,
O'erhanging roof and living architrave!
Your hearts have long been quiet, and the Word
Hath passed to other lips. . . . Nay! can it be
Yon curtain of the purple heather stirred?
A signal flashed? A whisper grew? and ye
Have vanished all within the sheltering cleft?
How hushed with prayer the temple ye have left!

OUT OF A THOUSAND

As at Cremona, home of chorded sound,
Some master-workman, plying his loved trade,
When he a thousand violins hath made,
Makes one that shall be heard the world around:
Nor knows he how his wonted toil was crowned;
For if that wizard instrument be weighed, —
By every test of sight and touch assayed —
Not other than its congeners 't is found.

So is it with the work that thou dost frame,
O Bard! Among ten thousand fading lines,
Thou shalt, perchance (but not through studious zeal,
Nor lust for current praise or future fame),
Achieve a single peerless verse that shines
Emblazoned with a translunary seal!

TO ONE WHO SLEEPS

As Atys slept beneath the ancient fir,
Nor all the tears a goddess could but weep,
Restored the orbèd light, the pulse's leap —
As Atys slept, while but one finger's stir
Showed life yet dwelling with the slumberer;
So, too, within thy spirit's donjon-keep,
Art thou, through all thy days, asleep, asleep!
And I to wake thee, find no potent spur.

Oh, wouldst thou put to proof a finger's power,
And win, — where lesser ones the right arm bare!
Time speeds. 'Tis no Immortal mourns thy lot;
But when some sylvan year his leaves shall shower,
I shall stoop homeward, and forget sweet care —
Sweet care that watched and wept — but woke
thee not!

THE MIRAGE OF THE HOMESICK

I knew not how I loved thee — thou, my land
(Mine and my fathers' land, in very deed) —
Until embarked I watched the pier recede,
Tear-dimmed, and dim with many a waving hand.
Still, all the onward day, that farewell band,
Undistanced by the steamer's throbbing speed,
Arose, with tender, outstretched palms, to plead,
"Return, return, exile from Heaven's strand!"
Aye, all day long, though past the glimpse of thee, —
O land, my own, — far on the restless verge,
Between the hollow and the foam-flecked surge,
Many a meadow-vale I seemed to see —
White spire, and village-green, and orchard tree
Lift from the deep, within the deep to merge!

DUAL HOMESICKNESS

Whilst I in Old-World capitals sojourned, —
In storied cities, rich with Time's acquest, —
A pilgrim from our wide, unstoried West,
Forever homeward I in spirit turned:
For me through each Atlantic sunset burned
My homeland dawn in braver splendor dressed.
The bird divine that sang from bosky nest,
Beside my brown-thrush scanty tribute earned.

But now, when I once more sit down at home,
What fond perversity my soul pursues!
She roves afar, beyond her native pale,
And slips Manhattan Isle to pace through Rome;
Or leaves the brown-thrush for the wingèd Muse —
For moonlit Cadenabbia's nightingale.

SPEAKING THE SHIPS

Untraveled dweller by the haven-side,
I saw the great ships come, sojourn a day,
Then set their eager sails, their anchor weigh,
And give themselves to rocking wind and tide.
I spake them not, nor they to me replied,
Of where their void and lonely journey lay;
Now, since my lips have tasted mid-sea spray,
In common speech I hail those wanderers wide.
To this: "Proud Scotia gave thy ribs to thee!"
To this: "Thy masts have known the Apennines!"
Or, "Tagus empties where thy frame was planned."
Or, "Say, thou gallant one, if true it be,
Thou hither cam'st with hoard of Levant wines
And dulcet fruits from many a sun-loved land!"

THE GENIUS OF THE CITY

City beloved! Magnet of ardent souls,
Focus of life concentric and of art!
Runs not a unity through every part —
One current through the human tide that rolls,
Howe'er thy pilgrims haste to scattered goals?
Ofttimes, amidst thy hurrying throngs, I start,
As at the impact of a beating heart —
Some sovran heart of hearts, that all controls!

It is thy Genius! Once a midday chime
For one swift moment rhythmic utterance lent —
The next, the Voice had passed, with close sublime!
And once, from those dark towers that front the sea,
A Light shot forth — and vanished! 'Twas, to me,
A spirit-glance thy watchful Genius sent.

CITY VISTAS

Our city fronts the morning wave, and greets
Serene all comers; and, on either side,
The sailing pines of nations sundered wide
A stately river in its journey meets.
How I have loved our city's vistaed streets,
That like some Western cañon's walls divide,
To show the sunset's purple band, where ride
Those legend-haunted masts and storm-strained sheets!

But when the electric lamps their argent globes
Float in mid-air, and in the upper night
Some zenith star all solitary gleams,
Or when in morning mists our city robes,
She seems created by some wizard's sleight,
To vanish dream-like on the tide of dreams!

LOST CHILDREN

(AT THE STATION-HOUSE)

" Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here: "
As the sad Florentine, upon the gate
Of endless night, beheld those words of fate,
So darken they our thought as we draw near
These haunts unused to prayer or softening tear.
But lo! like flowers that on fire's pathway wait
To comfort lands laid waste and desolate,
How the lost children light these shadows drear!

As tinkling springs that on a sudden greet
The traveler in a wild, rock-set and sear,
So rise the tones of childish laughter sweet —
Of little ones beguiled of grief and fear.
Then, seems some tender echo to repeat:
" There yet is hope, all ye who enter here! "

THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE STORM

Between a Trouble and a Grief I went
Dumb and outworn, and sought a sheltering spot
Beneath a rock, where the wild winds came not;
That there my soul, sore-tortured and clean-spent,
Might find such breathing-space, such dull content,
As chances in his all-indifferent lot,
Who hath the world forgot, and is forgot,
Within a self-drawn magic circle pent.

But ah, that place of peace supplied a foil
Whereon more dark the spirit's strife did show!
Henceforth, I seek the friendly storm — to win
Such solace as may be in constant toil
With wind and wave, that will not let me know
The fiercer tempest that endures within!

THE VERGE OF TEARS

There was a moment when I could have wept, —
Wept from a full heart: all the cords grew tight,
That in their orbits move the spheres of sight;
Across my brain the blind sirocco swept;
My throat ached, and a withering palsy crept
Upon my tongue, that then I had not might
To fashion forth a sound, howe'er so slight.
Still and appalled my soul within me kept.

Thou who hast stood upon the verge of tears, —
I need not tell thee of that desolate bourn,
But only this: when thou shalt reach the verge,
Be thou not other than thy human peers;
Weep then, oh weep! lest tears unshed return,
And be, long afterwards, thy spirit's stinging
scourge!

THE MASTER-CHARM

"Hast thou a charm to stay the Morning-Star
In his steep course?" — COLERIDGE.

"Hast thou a charm to stay the Morning-star,"
Sole lustre on the dawn's ethereal field,
Its image in a thousand streams revealed,
And broken silverly along the bar?
Soon and swift comes Aurora's flashing car,
When all the throats of song shall be unsealed,
And yearning buds their storèd sweetness yield —
"Hast thou a charm to stay the Morning-star?"

More potent knowledge! sorcery supreme!
More sought than spells of Eastern mages are,
Couldst thou prevail to hold for us the dream —
The dew — the mystery — the dear half-light
That are no more, once Youth has taken flight:
Hast thou a charm to stay *our* Morning-star?

THE FIRST FIRE OF THE SEASON

The first fire of the season warms my hearth:
Like a bright moth that long ensheathed has lain,
Shaking its wings of many an orient stain,
It leaves the prisoning oak log's sturdy girth.
Fresh with the new old gladness of the earth,
Renascent, it springs forth: and I am fain
(Having beheld the Summer droop and wane),
To think that here she has her true rebirth.
Ay — the sweet spirit of the Summer flown!
For, when, beside the fire, I close my eyes,
I hear so many sounds that I have known,
In Summer shade, or under Summer skies, —
The whir of insects in the fields new mown —
The call of birds — and happy leaf-drawn sighs!

THE WINTER THOUGHTS OF TREES

Do ye remember, or do ye forget,
O silent and sufficing ones — ye Trees,
That take and pass the storm as summer breeze?
The willing soil, the air, is in your debt,
The very waters under earth are set
To serve to you all things that best do please!
Wherefore, ye stand erect in regal ease,
And parley not with fears nor with regret.

From you the year has date; in you it ends —
Forever flows and ebbs in leafy green;
Fain would I know (and yet shall never know!)
If, now, the spirit in you looks serene,
Toward summers yet to be, or, blessing, bends
Above the shedded leaves of long ago!

RESTLESS ATOMS

A spark of fire — the six-rayed star of snow —
  A world-reflecting bead of crystal rain —
  An atom dust — a rounded pollen-grain —
The least of seeds the wild wind takes to sow —
Regardless all these come, regardless go;
  Each one but one of an unnoted train;
  And whether these be loth, or those be fain,
No other fate than Fate they seek to know.

They make completeness, and are merged therein;
  Not so are we. Our atom dust-and-fire
  Demandeth each his own fulfilled desire;
And knowledge what he shall be and hath been,
He turns himself in every way to win,
  Until, disjoined from dust, the spark expire!

FOOL'S GOLD

I

For gold they delved the rugged mountain side,
For gold they washed the yellow river sand;
With hope, and gleaming ore, the grizzled band
Took up their march across the desert wide.
The journey done, how did their fate deride!
They laid their prize within the chemist's hand,
With narrow gaze their prize the chemist scanned;
At last, " O men, it is fool's gold! " he cried.
Thou Genius of my much-deceivèd day,
I doubt not — I who seek for Truth each where —
If some grim sage my treasure should assay,
I'd fare as ill as did those miners fare!
But it may chance, before this word can slay,
That gentle Death such detriment shall spare.

II

Into thine heart, O friend, I sank a shaft,
And deemed I drew from thence a thousandfold.
If aught thou yieldest me but native gold,
Conceal what thou hast done, with kindly craft.
I care not, I — who shall have frowned, or laughed,
That I such dross for kingly metal hold:
What matters, when my sunlit day is told,
And I have drained the long Lethean draught?
But, while I live, thy wonted spell yet weave —
Ay, while I live, of thee I do entreat,
If e'er thy lips, thine eyes, thine heart deceive,
They shall deceive me still, in accents sweet!
If thou have mercy, to the lie still cleave,
And leash the truth that runs with swift and cruel feet!

MERIDIAN

I

I have been young; but youth has passed from me;
Yet all Youth held I hold, and close enfold,
Like Summer's sweetness, dropped in cells of gold,
And hived within some fast unleafing tree!
I am not yet of those who bend the knee
To Time, and " respite! " cry — I am not old,
Save by such rumors of autumnal cold
As turn the birds to thoughts of oversea.

Compeer in age with me — whoe'er thou art!
Rejoice, that now the hour of noon has struck,
When all things stand, and rest, at equipoise,
Youth braves it not within a fretted heart,
Nor Eld, with palsying fear, thy sleeve doth pluck:
Humane and mellow are thy noontide joys.

II

" Would I be young again? " Ah, no! Not I.
Think'st thou the Summer bough would re-enfold
Its leafage, like that magic tent of old
Which could become a fan to conjure by?
The silent harvests that now garnered lie —
Think'st thou they would renounce their gathered gold,
To be the bladed promise of the mold
Beneath the pearly-tinted April sky?

" Would I be young again? " Ah, no! Ah, no!
That were to run into the jarring fray
Unarmed, and take how many a grievous blow
Which cannot now undo, and — well-a-day!
It were to learn again how Youth can go —
The traitor whom no prayer nor gift can stay!

THE SECURITY OF DESOLATION

He who hath seen his grain-fields gather blight
  Heeds not the withering of the garden flowers;
He grieves not at the day's withdrawing light
  Who in a dungeon numbers his dim hours;
He feareth not the storm upon his head,
  Whose garments with the rough salt wave are soaked,
And he whose fire within his house is dead,
  Into the outer air will go uncloaked!

So he whose life some weak, loved hand has taken,
  Flies not the shaft of banded myrmidon,
Nor trembles when his citadel is shaken:
  Foretasting all, he hath no more to shun;
The Night, the Cold, the Dearth, the Wound Obscure,
  That men call Death, unmoved he shall endure!

A TALKING RACE

I sent my Ariel round the world in quest,
  To find by what main Virtues man is swayed.
The sprite returned and fluttering answer made:
  "I find that Truth by Falsehood is confessed;
Valor falls back, by blustering Cowardice pressed;
  The Strong Ones yield where Weakness stands arrayed;
And Love between a beggar's hands has laid
  His tribute — who receives it with a jest."

"And wherefore is this so?" I grieving, asked.
  "The Virtues silent are; much words they shun,
While those who, in their places, deftly masked,
  Lead men along, use plenteous words and fair.
Man's is a talking race, by talking won,"
  My Ariel said — and with his wings beat air!

SPEECH AND SILENCE

There be, whose thoughts have eagle wings of speech,
Not hampered more than is the eagle's flight,
And followed far with wonder and delight;
Their sovran sway of hearts who would impeach?
There be, who never to their kind outreach,
Self-willed to silence, on some native height.
There be dumb souls whose wistful eyes, too bright,
Do like the wounded fawn's our aid beseech.

Not mute am I except by force of fate;
For I have words of fire, and swift as flame,
And words, and words, and words, in endless store,
That, leal and willing, on my thought do wait;
But I in all the world no ear may claim;
So halt at home those heralds evermore.

FROM LIPS OF STONE

Amid a waste and solitary field,
Upon the twilight boundary of the day,
Upspake the timeless flintstone huge and gray:
"Why should my counsel be forever sealed?
To thee an ancient truth shall be revealed —
To thee, a wavering mortal, brief of stay: —
Something of kin, — thou piece of passioned clay,
Art thou and I, whom passion ne'er did wield;
For, lo! did not Deucalion at the flood
Behind him fling us stones — and men we grew?
With limbs we moved abroad, with lips we spake!
And hast not thou, with grief, seen flesh-and-blood
Become to thee as stones, that Pity's dew
Could never melt, nor yet thine anger break?"

OVER THE BRINK

I shuddered when but now, again, I thought
(As oft before, till I no more could think)
Of all the myriads passed beyond Time's brink,
No longer to be found — scarce longer sought —
Since they who for their loss with grief were fraught
So soon, themselves, of Lethe's wave did drink,
And out of mortal ken forever sink —
Vanished alike in the abysmal Nought!

Why did I shudder? 'Tis an ancient tale.
They mused on this in Tyre, in Nineveh,
And the Pelasgic Cities longer gone.
'Tis no strange theme. Why did I shudder? —
Ah!
Methought I felt the ground beneath us fail —
As toward that Gulf of Silence we were drawn!

TO IGNORANCE

Hail, mother of the young world's poesy,
Surveying earth and heaven with widening eyes
That saw sweet Daphne in the laurel tree,
And Ariadne in the starry skies,
Old Sylvan leaning on his oaken staff,
The Lares smiling through the firelight gleams.
A child among thy children thou didst laugh,
Or sigh, or tremble — telling thy strange dreams.
Come back, dear nurse of those benignant days,
There's still a place that thou mayst call thy own, —
'Tis in my heart! For ofttimes science strays,
And oft the sage misleading paths has shown.
This knows the poet; therefore is he free,
As bird or field-flower — and will follow thee!

PEACE

Much I desired when Youth did fire my veins,
To join fair combat with some foe august;
And more I dreaded sloth and creeping rust
Than any meed of martyr scorns and pains.
How would my heart beat quick at clarion strains;
All to the God of battle would I trust —
As one who, midst the hissing barbs and dust,
From some swift Argive chariot flung the reins!

But now my pulse is slowed, my veins are cold,
O Spirit of the leafage silver-green —
Now let thy cool sweet shadow intervene,
That I no more the strenuous day behold;
So fold me, as the flocks that rest in fold,
While Hesper makes the darkening sky serene.

ELUSIVE PRESENCE

And didst thou come, thou long-lost, longed-for one,
That day when (thinking not of thee) I cried
For respite from my foes on every side —
Didst point the refuge whither I could run?
And didst thou come, that evening drear and dun,
When (thinking not of thee — too sorely tried)
I looked and saw the western clouds divide,
And the fair setting of the full-orbed sun?
And didst thou come on that dark, sighing dawn,
Shadowed with troubles of the day to-be,
When, suddenly, obeying thy still call,
Were all those surging fears dismissed and gone!
And dost thou come all hours, and blessing all,
Except the hour when most I think of thee?

WHERE?

I

If nothing, once create, be ever lost,
But holds its being yet somewhere in space,
Ah, set me on the fine elusive trace
Of Beauty's unreturning myriad host!
Anoint mine eyes, that I may see the ghost
Of last year's rose, and all the tender race
Of flowers that in some paradisal place
Forget the flame of drought, the scourge of frost!
Tell where is fled the perfume of the rose?
Where lives the carol of the long-flown bird?
Where now the sunset gold of yestereve?
Why speak of these? What magic shall disclose
Where dwells the voice that so my being stirred,
The light of those lost eyes for which mine grieve?

FAR OTHERWHERE

II

Far otherwhere, at some unknown still tide —
Not morn, nor eve, nor windless noon, of ours;
Unknown the hour, unknown the springing flowers
And the sweet odors borne from every side —
Far hence I met her, the beloved who died!
At sight of her the tears fell in warm showers.
" Be praise," I cried, " unto the Heavenly Powers
That sent at last great Death to be my guide! "
Then raised she her deep eyes — all my lost light!
Then slowly did she turn her shining head:
" Whence comest thou, and who? " she softly said —
She, the beloved! — I, stranger in her sight!
The while I gazed, the vision paled and fled,
And round me trembled the wide, startled night.

MEMORY AND THE FULL MOON

O Nights of silver memory — O Nights! —
  Here at this casement (as of old) I stand,
  And greet the moon at full, flooding the land
With mystery and unmeasured dream-delights,
But they who with me gazed on those green heights —
  Distanced in moonlight — while the night wind bland
  Rare incense from deep forest altars fanned —
Ah, whither gone, with giddy seasons' flights?

Intenser than of old thy burning orb,
  Thou planet lone in star-forgetting skies!
    Each ray from thee with tender purport smites:
Say, didst thou not those love-lit souls absorb,
  Wherefore thy splendor aches against mine eyes?
    O Nights of silver memory — O Nights!

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